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ABSTRACT

The paper explores reasons for the failure of contemporary approaches to moral education and suggests an alternative based on theories of prosocial behavior. Prosocial behavior comprises actions intended to aid another person or group of people without the actors' anticipation of external rewards. Cultural and social factors appear to be most directly linked with prosocial behavior: that is, such behavior is likely to be learned as the child experiences models, expectations, and reinforcement. However, assumptions of current moral education approaches tend to ignore the cultural and social factors. These programs (values clarification, cognitive development, and rational analysis) emphasize the development of decision-making and reasoning skills and independence and autonomy. Lack of specific moral content and of student evaluation also characterizes current practices. An alternative approach is based on Durkheim's (1975) view that the goal of moral education is to develop the elements of morality: discipline, attachment to groups, and autonomy (a self-chosen sense of the good and one's duty). Implications are that a criterion for recruitment should be based on personal characteristics which make a potential teacher a significant role model, the school atmosphere should involve group orientation, and the curriculum should stress that there are certain givens concerning moral life. Problems relevant to this approach should also be examined: indoctrination, cultural relativism, and moral conflict. (Author/KC)

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On the Limits of Contemporary Moral Education:

Psychological and Sociological Perspectives

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Abstract

Contemporary approaches to moral education feature individual choice through rational decision making as the essential component of morality. Research indicates that approaches with this emphasis have had no success in having an impact on moral behavior. This paper explores the reasons for this failure and offers an alternative perspective on the proper purpose and methods for moral education. The psychological literature on the development of prosocial behavior indicates that early personal and social interactions are highly significant in the development of a sense of morality. Rationality, from this perspective is not a major determinant of moral behavior. The sociological perspective of Emile Durkiem stresses routine and habit as the necessary foundation of social morality. This paper concludes by building upon the above two perspectives to develop a broad conception of moral education which emphasizes modeling and induction.

On the Limits of Contemporary Moral Education:

Psychological and Sociological Perspectives

In 1966, well into my second year as a high school social studies teacher, I began to question whether or not my approach to teaching was having any impact upon the myriad of behavior patterns among my students which were obviously destructive to themselves and the people around them. What I observed in my school let me to the inescapable conclusion that I and my fellow teachers were having little or no influence on the development of what could be called positive social behavior. 1966 also happened to mark the beginning of one of the earlier movements within moral education -- values clarification. The initial writings of Raths, Harmin and Simon (1966) provided me with what, at the time, appeared to be a rationale and method for developing morally responsible behavior in my students. My disquiet concerning my effectiveness as a teacher and the advent of values clarification initiated what for me has been 14 years of interest and practice in the field of moral education. From the early work in values clarification to the more recent advances of the cognitive developmental approach of Lawrence Kohlberg, the past years have been fast-paced and exciting ones for those of us interested in moral education. The scholarly dialogue and new curriculum development over this period of time represent real advances in conceptual clarity and classroom practice over the field as it existed in 1966. However, it is still very much an open question whether or not these advances of the past decade and one-half have in any significant way increased the schools' ability to conduct moral education that has any noticeable impact on students' social behavior. Recent reviews of research by Leming (in press) and Lockwood (1979) on the two most visible and widely practices approaches in the field, values

clarification and cognitive development, suggest that student gains, demonstrated as a result of these programs, are unrelated to social behavior. There exists no evidence that values clarification has any impact on interpersonal behavior and the only consistent finding from the cognitive-developmental research indicates that as a result of discussion of moral dilemmas over the course of a year, one can expect to find a modest gain in subjects' stage of moral reasoning, between 1/4 to 3/4 of a stage among 50 to 70% of the students. However, shifts in the levels of reasoning found in public schools (pre-conventional and conventional) are not associated with major changes in social behavior. I have the nagging suspicion that, should Hartshorne and May reappear today to conduct another Character Education Study, this time focusing on the impact of contemporary moral education curricula, the results would be the same as those found in the late 1920s.

Since the overwhelming preponderance of current research in moral education is limited to verbal and written behavior, it is possible to hold out hope that if only the correct variables could be identified and measured, positive results will be found regarding students' morally relevant social behavior. I am skeptical regarding this likelihood. As I have read the available literature in the behavioral sciences on moralization, namely with regard to the development of thought and action, it has become increasingly obvious that inspite of the creative and significant efforts of Lawrence Kohlberg to bridge the gap between psychological knowledge and educational practice, there still remains a deep chasm between what we know about moralization and the assumptions underlying current conceptions of moral education. Current educational practice in moral education pays little heed to currently available knowledge from the behavioral sciences regarding the influences and dynamics within the moralization process.

In this paper I will attempt to clarify some of the reasons for the failure of contemporary moral education to yield socially significant results. First, I will examine the assumptions of contemporary moral education from the perspective of the development of prosocial behavior. Differences between what the behavioral sciences reveal about the development of prosocial behavior and the assumptions made by contemporary moral education is a significant factor in the failure of current moral education efforts. Secondly, I will examine the assumptions of contemporary moral education from the structural-functional perspective of Emile Durkheim (1973). In both comparisons I will attempt to show that the assumptions of contemporary moral education represent an unnessarily narrow conception of morality. In doing so, it will be argued that contemporary moral education programs ignore crucial areas where adult morality is forged. Finally, I will attempt to sketch out what I see as a more realistic approach to moral education based on a broader conception of moral growth.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR AND CONTEMPORARY MORAL EDUCATION

One of the major foci of moralization research, an area that is of central concern to the task of moral education, is the development of prosocial behavior. Prosocial behavior has been defined by Muessen and Eisenberg-Berg (1979) as "...actions that are intended to aid or benefit another person or group of people without the actors' anticipation of external rewards (p. 3)." It is reasonable to assume that the salient factors and dynamics influencing the development of prosocial behavior are similar to those in operation in the learning of other relevant moral behaviors. This paper will focus on the development of prosocial behavior

because of the extensive and varied evidence available and because prosocial behavior is an inescapable dimension of any efforts at moral education.

The Determinants of Prosocial Behavior.

What are the major determinants of prosocial behavior? What factors account for individual and group variation in prosocial behavior? Four clusters of variables which are relevant with regard to understanding the limits and potentialities of moral education, have been shown to be significant antecedents of prosocial behavior.[1]

Cultural influences. In many cultures prosocial behavior is common, whereas in other cultures egoistic, selfish behavior is the norm. The behavior of Ik children, as frighteningly described by Turmbull (1972), compared with the altruistic and group concern of the young children in the USSR (Bronfrenbrenner, 1970) contrast well the wide variations found in different cultures. Whiting and Whiting (1975), in one of the few studies to identify the factors which vary across culture which are related to the occurrence of prosocial behavior, found that children are likely to engage in a high degree of prosocial behavior if: 1) the culture has a simple social organization - the presence of the extended family; 2) children are, at an early age, assigned tasks and responsibilities; 3) women perform important economic functions; 4) consideration of others, group orientation, and sharing are stressed by the major socialization agents.

Socialization influences. Cultural influences do not produce a population uniform in its propensity to engage in prosocial behavior. Significant within group variance remains to be explained. The socialization practices within cultures display significant variation and enhance or restrict the development of prosocial behavior. Family members,

especially parents, have been found to be the most significant agents of socialization. Although few in-depth ethnographic studies exist which tie observations in the naturalistic setting of the early home environment to later social behavior, a variety of questionnaires and experimental reproductions of socialization experiences and practices have suggested that modeling, nurturance, disciplinary techniques, maturity demands and assignments of responsibility are significant factors in the development of prosocial behavior.

A variety of studies have repeatedly shown that modeling is a powerful factor in producing both short and lasting changes in social behavior. The observation of a model performing prosocial acts is likely to raise the child's level of such behaviors as generosity, helping, and sharing, often for periods of long duration. Bronfrenbrenner (1970) has identified seven characteristics of the model as being related to its potential effectiveness:

1. The potency of the model increases with the extent to which the model is perceived as possessing a high degree of competence, status and control over resources.

2. The inductive power of the model increases with the degree of prior nurturance or regard exhibited by the model.

3. The most 'contageous' models for the child are likely to be those who are the major sources of support and control in the environment; namely, his parents, playmates, and older children and adults who play a prominent role in his everyday life.

4. The inductive power of the model increases with the degree to which the person perceives the model as similar to himself.

5. Several models, exhibiting similar behavior, are more powerful inducers of change than a single model.

6. The potency of the model is enhanced when the behavior exhibited is a salient feature of the actions of a group of which the child already is or aspires to be a member.

7. The power of the model to induce actual performance (as distinguished from acquisition) is strongly influenced by the observed consequences for the model of the exhibited behavior.

Nurturance, essentially as a form of modeling where parents display such characteristics as consideration, kindness, sympathy, has not been shown, by itself, to account for the development of prosocial behavior. Evidence does indicate, however, that maternal nurturance may be a significant factor in strenghening the predisposition to engage in prosocial behavior.

The way parents discipline influences their children's social behavior. Two types of disciplinary techniques have been shown to be significant in this respect: power assertion - control by physical power or material resources, e.g., physical punishment or withdrawal of materials or privileges; and induction - reasoning with the child, especially explaining the painful consequences of the child's act for others. Research has indicated that power assertion tends to diminish the child's propensity to engage in prosocial behavior while use of induction techniques facilitate the development of prosocial orientations.

Maturity demands, parental maintenance of high standards, together with control and pressures on children to behave in mature ways, especially with respect to assuming responsibility for others, has a positive effect on prosocial behavior. Bronfrenbrenner's (1970) examination of child rearing and schooling in the USSR illustrates the power of this mode of socialization.

It is obvious that parents and the early social environment of the child have a substantial impact on the development of children. Two additional sources of socialization experiences of prosocial tendencies outside of the early home environment have been identified. Peers have been

shown to be a highly significant source of modeling behaviors of both antisocial and prosocial behaviors. There is also indisputable evidence that the mass media, especially television, is a significant factor in socialization. It has been shown that tendencies toward aggressive and violent behavior can be increased through television role models as well as can tendencies toward prosocial behaviors such as gentleness, helping, and sharing. Strangely enough, given the amount of time children spend in formal school settings, there is little evidence concerning the nature and extent of the impact of teacher's modeling behavior on children.

Cognitive and Affective Influences. Although one might assume that judgements and reasoning about moral issues would impact significantly on tendencies to engage in prosocial behavior, the evidence is less than compelling in this regard. There is some evidence to suggest that level of moral judgement may be a regulator of an individual's propensity to engage in prosocial behavior; however, the evidence is neither strong nor consistent. The correlations discovered between level of moral judgement and prosocial behavior have demonstrated that a relationship does exist; however, the correlations found have not been strong enough to permit accurate prediction of any particular individual's behavior.

Research on cognitive role taking, the ability to take the perspective of and accurately describe the feelings of others, has been found to be a significant antecedent of prosocial behavior. It appears that the ability to accurately perceive others' interests and feelings is a prerequisite to taking action to aid others. One cannot decide to help others unless one can determine whether or not they are in need of help.

Empathy, emotional responses shared by the individual based on perceptions of others' feelings, has also been shown to be a potent antecedent of prosocial behavior. A variety of studies have demonstrated that

training in role taking and empathy can contribute significantly to increases in prosocial behavior.

Situational influences. Characteristics residing within the individual are not sufficient to explain all the variance found in prosocial behavior. The specific and immediately present context also contributes to the disposition to engage in prosocial behavior. Among the situational influences investigated, moods of the individual have been found to be a significant, if transitory, influence in prosocial behavior; people more readily assist others when they feel happy, pleased, and successful. It has been also found that in specific situations children's helping and sharing increase when those responses are directly rewarded. This trend is also transitory with the increased altruism only manifest as long as the reinforcers are present. Preaching has also been found to be a significant factor in influencing children's prosocial behavior. Mild, low intensity preaching has minimal effect, but intensive and direct preaching, with strong arguments favoring prosocial action may be highly effective within a specific situation. Another intriguing situational variable associated with altruistic behavior is related to the presence of others. It has been found that the presence of others is conducive to the helping of others among young children, but with adults the reverse is true. It has also been found that children are more eager to help others if the others are perceives as well liked and deserving of help.

In sum, cultural and social factors appear to be the most directly linked with the learning of prosocial behavior. To the extent that the young child experiences models of, expectations for, and reinforcement for prosocial behavior, such behavior is likely to be learned. Early on, the immediate family provides the nutriment for the learning of prosocial

behavior. As the social world of the child expands, other factors, especially interactions with peers and the expansion of potential models through the media, become increasingly important. To the extent that these later influences are perceived as of high salience and also at variance with earlier learning, alter ations in original dispositions may take place. Additionally, a variety of cognitive and affective factors such as level of moral reasoning, role taking, and empathy have been shown to be related to the disposition to engage in prosocial behavior and account for some of the interpersonal variations found in prosocial behavior. However, it has not been shown that these factors can, independent of social and cultural influences, account for the incidence of prosocial behavior. These factors likely mediate existing dispositions.

Available evidence failed to implicate schools in any significant way in the learning of prosocial behavior. In fairness, it must be noted that social scientists have failed to expend any significant effort to identify possible in-school determinants of prosocial behavior. This lack of evidence does not mean that one can conclude that schools play no role in the learning of prosocial behavior. To the extent that schools constitute a significant dimension of the child's social and cultural environment, they likely do play a role. However, it is still an open question the extent to which selected in-school variables such as teacher modeling behavior, classroom, or school climate, or the cognitive outcomes of specific moral education curricula are differentially associated with variations in prosocial behavior. Bronfrenbrenner's (1970) analysis of schooling in the USSR suggests that schooling has the potential to be, in consort with family and society, a significant influence in the moral learning of children. However, the dynamics which Bronfrenbrenner identifies as salient in the moral development of youth stand in stark contrast

to the assumptions and environment in which moral education is practiced in our society.

The Limits of Contemporary Moral Education From the Perspective of the Development of Prosocial Behavior.

In light of the failure of explicit moral education to have a clearly discernable impact on moral behavior, an examination of the assumptions of contemporary moral education programs as they relate to the processes involved in the learning of prosocial behavior may provide a key to understanding the reasons for this failure. The first task is therefore to identify the major shared assumptions of current moral education approaches concerning the learning of moral behavior.

The field of moral education contains a wide variety of approaches. This section will focus on the three approaches which enjoy the widest notariety and acceptance: the values clarification approach (Raths, Harmin, and Simon, 1978); the cognitive developmental approach (Hersch, Paolitto, and Reimer, 1979), and the rational analysis approach (e.g., Newmann, 1970; Fraenkel, 1973; Nelson, 1974; and Metcalf, 1971). This final approach is most often the product of social studies classrooms.

Although each of the above approaches to moral education has distinctive emphases, they share a number of common assumptions concerning the nature of the learner, the goals of moral education, and the proper function of teachers and schools.

1) Moral action is interpreted as those actions which are intentional and based on specified modes of deliberation. The purpose of moral education is the development of the appropriate decision making skills and orientations. Growth is to be fostered and outcomes to be evaluated within decision making contexts. The content of the decision making is problematic situations. These situations may be either social in nature

(welfare laws, ERA, abortion policies, etc.) or personal (lying to protect a friend, keeping a promise, etc.).

2) Moral education programs assume that reason motivates action, that people act in accordance with their ratiocination. That is, once individuals decide what their obligations are, they then act in accordance with those obligations. Hence, the goal of moral education becomes to influence thought; action will necessarily follow.

3) Current moral education approaches assume that morally educated people ought to be independent and autonomous, subordinate only to the dictates of their reason and certain vague higher order decision making principles.

4) Contemporary moral education eschews advocating any specific moral content. The outcome of contemporary programs is left open with regard to specific moral injunctions. All of the approaches caution against moralizing. Within each of the approaches, however, there is agreement that certain forms of deliberation are preferable over others. That is, each of the approaches advocates that there are certain ingredients of appropriate moral reasoning such as attention to facts, exploration of alternatives, following rules of evidence and reducing or eliminating inconsistency. Non-rational methods of warranting statements of moral obligation are generally ignored or discouraged. Divine revelation, astrology, or the I-Ching are not seen as a valid part of moral education curriculum.

5) The teacher's role is primarily that of a facilitator of the deliberative process. Whithin the context of the moral education lessons, teachers are urged to exercise extreme caution before advocating any specific moral content. The teacher also has the responsibility to develop in the classroom, an environment that is conducive to the free, open and

non-judgemental exchange of ideas.

6) Moral education occurs within the parameters of the existing curricula. It takes place within existing courses in the form of single classroom exercises usually on a weekly or monthly basis.

7) Students are not to be evaluated with either praise, disapproval, or grades concerning the moral worth of the content of their decisions which ensue from the moral education curriculum.

The following differences exist between the dynamics of moralization in the development of prosocial behavior and the assumptions held by contemporary moral education programs. In the moralization process, examples and rules are presented and behavior is learned in naturally occuring social contexts. In contemporary moral education examples and rules are decontextualized with respect to the social life space of the child. In the moralization process the reinforcement patterns are generally immediate and derive from individuals perceived as significant others. In moral education social behavior is generally not rewarded or punished by the classroom teacher as a regular part of the moral education curriculum. Also, the salience of the teachers is generally much lower than other figures in the child's environment. Of course, teachers punish and praise for a variety of behaviors in schools, but the above programs do not recommend this sort of teacher behavior as an integral part of their program. The literature on moralization suggests that the learning of moral behavior is inevitably imbedded within the child's social environment and that the behaviors learned by the child are tied directly to his social life. Moral education, as currently conceived, is not related to the salient dimensions of the child's life.

In the moralization process thought either follows, or occurs concomitantly, with action. That is, reasons are given for actions after the action is already an accomplished fact. Reasoning arises out of behavior to explain, interpret, or rationalize experience. It has been found that giving reasons for a certain act or policy is an effective means of influencing behavior. Induction and preaching have been found to be powerful ingredients in the moralization process. Current moral education efforts do not advocate either induction or preaching. Changes in behavior can result in changes in thought; thought can give rise to new behavior. To the extent that moral education focuses on the latter, it ignores a powerful means of moral education.

It would appear that from a variety of perspectives, that contemporary moral education efforts and the development of prosocial behavior are operating in different domains and under different assumptions. The lack of evidence supporting current moral education efforts to have a significant impact on moral behavior is a direct result of this failure to build upon, and develop a theoretical and methodological foundation consistent with available knowledge concerning the moralization process. A major reason for moral education's inattention to the moralization process is to be found in the ethos underlying our current political system. Respect for the freedom of individual citizens and our concern for human justice and dignity within a democratic context have come to be interpreted as meaning that rational inquiry and individual choice are the only legitimate means of social education. Decision making has become the sole ingredient of social and moral education. In an attempt to develop a conception of moral education consistent with the democratic ethos regarding rational decision making in an individualistic context, three

assumptions have been made which limit current efforts. First, respect for the individual and his right to freedom of choice in moral matters has been interpreted far too absolutely. Secondly, the parameters of the conditions and ingredients of moral education have been set too narrowly. Thirdly, it has been assumed too readily that what constitutes the ideal state of mature morality is a reasonable basis for the education of youth. The major error of contemporary moral education has been its failure to take into account the social basis of the learning of morality. In the remainder of this paper I will present Durkheim's view of the function and dynamics of moral education, discuss the implications of this view for contemporary moral education, and finally deal with some inevitable questions and objections likely to arise.

CONTEMPORARY MORAL EDUCATION FROM THE STRUCTURAL-FUNCTIONAL[2] PERSPECTIVE

Durkheim (1975) holds that morality is essentially a social undertaking. Society is the source of morality and its purpose is the collective interest of society. In order to maintain a social environment which protects the rights and welfare of its members, any society needs a comprehensive system of prohibitions whose objective is to limit the range within which individual behavior should and normally does occur. Morality therefore consists of a socially accepted system of rules that predetermine conduct. These rules state how one must act in given situations and to behave properly is to follow these rules conscientiously. These rules are ultimately justified by their efficacy in maintaining a stable environment in which the individual can live with dignity and freedom.

According to Durkheim there are three essential elements involved in the concept of morality. The first of these elements is discipline.

Discipline is the disposition that regularizes our conduct within the totality or moral rules that already live and operate around us. It is our willful assent to conform to this order. Essential to the concept of discipline is both man's propensity for regularity and, therefore, the need to yield to the moral order, and the need to restrict impulse or inclination. That is, conduct must become orderly, follow social mores, and transcend impulse and suggestion. Society requires that impulse be controlled. In order for civic life to succeed, the individual must be free from an incessant search for appropriate conduct. Discipline is the controlling of that impulse, the recognition of the authority of the moral law, and the willful subjugation of the individual to that law.

The second element of morality is attachment to the group. Discipline and the collective ideal are two reflections of the same reality. Since moral authority is social in origin, attachment to the group is society conceived as that which is desirable and good, that which attracts us. Discipline, on the other hand, is society conceived as that which commands us.

The third element of morality is autonomy or self-determination. One of the fundamental axioms of morality is that the human being is the "sacred thing par excellence." As a result, it follows that any restriction on individual conscience is immoral since it violates individual autonomy. Durkheim avoids the apparent contradiction between both individual autonomy and the necessary subjugation of the individual to the collective interest in the following manner. He states that the conformity embodied in morality is not the result of physical restraint or external imposition, but rather it is the result of individual reflection which deems conformity as good because there exists no other alternative for social life. This recognition is not one of resignation,

but rather is based upon enlightened allegiance. Liberation occurs through the willful assent to society and morality, recognizing that there is no other basis for either personal or social life. The individual, through his reason, is able to check the extent to which the moral order is based upon the natural order of things and to the extent that we find it as such, we can freely conform.

The Theory and Practice of Moral Education

The goal of moral education is to develop in the child the elements of morality: discipline, attachment to groups and autonomy - a self chosen sense of the good and one's duty. Although Durkheim describes autonomy as essential to the concept of morality, he cautions against viewing morality as a personal artifact whose configuration, from childhood, is totally created by the individual. Durkheim recognizes that the rational as well as the non-rational play significant roles in the moralization of the child. Among the very young the teacher's role necessarily involves the use of some non-rational activities, for example, the use of his/her authority to convey rules in a powerful manner and the use of punishment to signal vigorous disapproval of the violation of moral rules. Later in the child's development, when conceptual and reasoning powers are more fully developed, the role of reasoning becomes more of the teacher's province. The process of moral education strives to shift the initial deference to moral authority in the early years gradually toward an internal self-chosen moral orientation. Durkheim does not make the mistake of assuming that what constitutes full-blown adult morality should define the practice of moral education with the very young. Two attributes of young children, their suggestability and preference for regularity should be used by the teacher to achieve the early goals of education. Early on, according to Durkheim, the teacher

must put his orders regarding moral rules and the social order, with firmness and resolution. It is through the teacher that the morality of the classroom (in effect, a social group with an existing moral code) is revealed to the child. The classroom plays an important role in the moral education process in that it represents an intermediary step between the affective morality of the family and the more impartial morality of the society. The child necessarily loses some of his/her uniquness and is treated more impartially than in the family. This initial subjugation of the child to an impartial moral code is critical if the child is to develop and finally, upon reaching adulthood, function in a morally responsible manner.

Since moral violation, the breaking of the moral code, undermines and diminishes the social morality, the teacher, in order to preserve the worth of the rule, must clearly and forcefully censure that act - vigorous disapproval is therefore the essence of punishment.

The school and classroom environments also play an important role in the Durkheim conception of moral education. All children have altruistic sentiments. By giving the child an idea of the groups that he belongs to, and attaching him to these groups through collective life and efforts helps to insure that the altruistic will triumph over the egoistic and the impulsive. The love of the collective life can be developed in the young children through: a) gradually broadening the consciousness of the child to infuse it with the ideals of the social groups to which he belongs, b) linking these ideas with the greatest number of similar ideas and feelings, c) communicating these group ideals and feelings with warmth and feeling, and d) developing the power of moral action through exercise - group effort in the collective interest.

The role of the teacher is to structure the class in such a way as to insure that moral sentiments develop and that they are reinforced through a sense of unity which grows out of common enterprise.

The school can contribute to the moral development of children in a manner that the family cannot. Within the family the bonds and sense of solidarity are developed from blood relationship and are reinforced by constant contact and interaction. Political society, ideally constituted, is not predicated upon personal relationships. The proper function of the school is to bridge the gap between the moral system of the home based on love and intimacy and the moral system of the society, impersonal and based on collective self-interest. School, however, is more than the transmission of knowledge and modes of thinking. If society remains only an appearance, a far off ideal to the child, then he is likely to call into question the devotion and sacrifice which is at the root of moral life - because the referent is unclear. Society must be fleshed out to the child. The knowledge of the social sciences and the humanities provide insights which allow the child to move to a mature morality. Adult morality that is originally based upon a degree of fear and deference to powerful authority, is broadened to include attachment to groups and finally, through reason and study, develops into autonomous self-acquiescence.

The Limitations of Contemporary Moral Education From the Social Functional Perspective.

From the social functional perspective the weakness of contemporary moral education is more one of omission than what is included. Within the Durkheimian perspective rationality plays a significant role, for it is only through a reasoned examination of the contemporary moral life one

reaches the morally mature position of enlightened assent and conformity to those standards. Durkheim realizes that there is always the possibility that the precise nature of one's obligations may be ambiguous or that the situation may be novel. However, where Durkheim conceives or moral life as governed primarily by routine and habit, contemporary moral education characterizes contemporary moral life as involving continual crisis and novelty. With the emphasis on the novel and problematic, contemporary moral eduation avoids attempting to teach children concrete ways of behaving for specific situations. Instead, according to contemporary moral education, the emphasis should be on open-ended questions concerning one's obligations in each specific situation. The principles which contemporary moral education suggests we teach are what John Wilson (1967) has called second order principles, that is, skills necessary to make good reasonable moral decisions. Contemporary approaches to moral education have not advocated that we teach specific first order principles - principles containing the content of moral beliefs, e.g., always tell the truth, never steal what doesn't belong to you, etc. There is recognition within contemporary moral education that there are certain first order principles such as justice, freedom, human dignity which all ought to refer to in our deliberations; however, these are so general and often ethereal that they seldom permit easy translation into specific actions for specific situations.

Durkheim's view of the habitual and routine as the basis for moral life poses an apparent paradox by stressing the essential element of autonomy through enlightened assent. Contemporary writers on moral education have avoided dealing with this apparent difficulty by ignoring the central role of habit in moral life. R. S. Peters (1963) is one of

the few writers in the field of moral education to recognize the inevitability of this conflice and to deal with it cogently. As the literature on the development of prosocial behavior suggests, the child is not initially led to moral behavior through reflective means. This learning of one's duties through non-reflective means is both necessary and desirable. Necessary because the young child cannot (lacks the capacity) adopt mature morality, desirable because this learning provides the necessary commitment and foundation for effective functioning within society, a society where the majority of one's life is in fact governed by habit and convention. As R. S. Peters (1963) notes: "The palace of reason has to be entered by the courtyard of habit (p. 214)."

Contemporary moral education takes a somewhat jaundiced view of any attempts to instill specific morals in children. Teachers who present specific moral ideals to children are generally accused of "indoctrination," a sin of the utmost severity to most moral educators. Cries concerning the respect for the individual, the pluralistic nature of our society, etc. usually rain down on those who suggest that we ought to explicitly or implicitly teach specific first order moral principles. The teaching of specific values has been labeled the "bag of virtues" appraoch by the cognitive developmentalists. Values learned in an unreflective manner have been seen as a major source of psychological malaise by the proponents of values clarification. Through dismissing so easily the nonreflective in moralization, contemporary moral education has overlooked a necessary and essential dimension in the moralization of youth.

To the extent that schooling is a significant factor in the learning of morality in children, it is most directly the result of the social

and moral climate of the schools, the peer interactions that take place there and the non-curricular communications of the teachers concerning right and wrong. With the exception of occasional jeremiads against the hidden curriculum's potential for making children passive and unreflective, contemporary moral education has, until recently, failed to take a hard look at the potential of the hidden curriculum for moral education. This reluctance is understandable in that the dynamics of the hidden curriculum in the learning of moral behavior are essentially non-reflective and indoctrinaire, which strike at the very heart of the tenents of current curriculum efforts.

If Durkheim is correct in his view of the proper method and content of moral education, then contemporary moral education presents an incomplete view on the moral education process. It attempts to superficially deal only with the end of the process (autonomy) and rejects its beginnings. To the extent that the reflective modes advocated by contemporary moral education assist children and young adults in recognizing the legitimacy of contemporary life then it has the potential to be a significant factor within the moral education process. However, to the extent that it presents to the child the impression, and develops in the child the expectation that he exists independent of society and, he creates his own morality, it is dangerous to the child and to the society within which the child will live his adult life. Morality, and hence moral education, is built on a foundation based on the rules of collective life within a given society. There is no alternative to life within society and to the extent that any approach to moral education fails to recognize the necessity of convention and routine as the foundation of moral life within that society, it fails both the child and the society. The hidden message that is conveyed to contemporary youth by

moral education efforts is that all moral questions are open, there are no set rules, and it's up to each individual to decide each case for himself. The movement toward "Meism" in contemporary society will find little to disagree with in the practice of contemporary moral education.

NEW DIRECTIONS - OLD QUESTIONS

A Redefinition of the Practice of Moral Education

In this section I will present what I see as a desirable reformulation of the goals and practices of moral education. This reformulation will not a utopian vision. It will be based on the assumption that the basic configuration of life in schools for teachers and students is likely to remain pretty much as it has in the past, that is, the subjects taught will remain constant, school boards and administration will remain relatively conservative, and teachers will continue to face classes of approximately 30 students for 185 days a year. In this reformulation I am ruling out such utopian visions as democratic schools and required or elective courses in moral education. These are ruled out not because they might not be valuable, but rather because past history and current economic and social forces indicate that they are unlikely to occur. In making my suggestions, I will be drawing upon the empirical findings regarding the development of prosocial behavior and the conceptual analysis on the goals of moral education as provided by Emile Durkheim.

The recruitment and training of teachers. Teachers have the potential to serve as significant role models for children in the area of moral education. Given that the inductive power of models has been shown to be related to the perceived attributes of the model (e.g., status, power, nurturance) it is reasonable to suggest that teachers should be recruited not

only on the basis of their ability to foster the intellectual development of children but, other things being equal, on their personal characteristics which make them potentially significant role models for children. There can be no doubt that teachers vary widely in how they are perceived by students and as a result, in their ability to model behavior effectively. This ability is a critical one for moral education and attention to the specific attributes of good role models is a crucial area for inquiry.

Also of great importance is that teachers exemplify appropriate moral content in their behavior. That is, the teacher must have a sophisticated and accurate knowledge of and a strong personal commitment to the moral rules which underpin our collective social life.[3] The teacher must be able to effectively verbalize these rules to children, interpret these rules as they apply to specific situations and do so in a manner that conveys commitment. The cognitive developmental approach to moral reasoning provides valuable insight into the need for attention to the students' and teachers' levels of moral judgment with a view to obtaining a degree of congruence necessary to insure meaningful communication.

The teacher must not only function effectively as a moral educator in the classroom in his verbal interactions with children, he/she can enhance potential effectiveness by being a visible and salient model in his/her social behavior. Through the teacher's own visible prosocial behavior within the social life of the community and students gain insight and see potential behaviors for modeling. Teachers have the potential to be more than neutral dispensers of knowledge, and other things being equal, skill, commitment, and the disposition for active involvement with the moral life of society should be an important factor in recruitment and training of teachers.

The Atmosphere and Curriculum of the School

In addition to the critical role of the teacher, the atmosphere of the school, the social experiences of the children, and the subjects which children study are important factors in the moral education of youth.

The atmosphere of the school, to the extent that it involves a collective group orientation, can provide two of the essential elements of morality identified by Durkheim. Both attachment to the group and the spirit of discipline can be developed in school settings where group activity is valued and where groups work collectively toward shared goals. Power and Reimer (1978) describe the moral atmosphere of the Cluster School where collective self-government provides a common goal. Power and Reimer describe how moral rules come into being and how conceptions of the roles evolve. Also important in their analysis is how discipline, in terms of behavior, follows out of the group activity. Although the specifics of the Cluster School appear to not be easily transported to typical school settings, the dynamics and the impact on student behavior offer a promising validation of Durkheim's theory and an exciting insight into individual development in behavior and moral reasoning in social contexts.

One of the more encouraging findings of Hartshorne and May (1928) was that classroom differences with respect to the incidence of deceit were the rule rather than the exception. These classroom differences were not to be accounted for by such differences as age, intelligence or home background. These differences were found regardless of the type of school (progressive or traditional) and persisted in student behavior even after a year. In other words, the personal attributes of the teacher and the climate established in the classroom appear to have had a significant and lasting impact on behavior.

Individuals who in dramatic and appealing ways are involved in the care of others or in other ways represent action in the collective interest should be grought into the school and allowed to share their experiences and convictions with children. Creative strategies are also needed which will allow youth to involve themselves in collective action in the collective interest. The Cluster School provides one such model, but it lacks a broader sense of social responsibility. Fred Newman (1970) has offered one such perspective in his work on education for civic competence.

The school cannot ignore the diverse sources of values to which the child is repeatedly exposed in the media, at home, and in the peer group. It can be a confusing experience for the child and if the school is to carry out its mandate for moral education, must assist the child in making sense of these competing values in a manner that does not result in slavish acceptance of any one view or transitory moral eclecticism.

The school, through its regular curriculum, can help the child to interpret and evaluate the competing moral positions presented in terms of the moral rules of society and the underlying core principles of justice and beneficience. In classroom exercises, children can explore how specific behaviors are entailed by commitment to specific values. The classroom can also be the place for fostering the cognitive development necessary for the full understanding of our social contractual system of government and morality. There has been much work already done in the field of moral education which is useful to the cognitive dimensions of moral education, i. e., understanding moral concepts, seeing relationships between choices and actions, following rules of reason, etc. These approaches should continue to be utilized to the extent that they make a contribution to this cognitive dimension of moral education.

The content of curriculum, especially the social studies and the humanities, offer the opportunity for students to reflect upon, from a broad social and historical perspective, the fundamental necessities of social life. Through the study of morality as revealed in history and literature, the individual can give social meaning to his own personal experiences, explore alternative views, and begin to carve out his own unique interpretation to responsible and moral adult life.

The difference between what I am advocating here and how I see moral education as currently constituted, is that education needs to stress that there are, within our current society at this point in history, certain givens regarding moral life. The current conception with the emphasis on process and ways of decision making ignores the social imperatives within which any choice necessarily takes place.

Commitment, concensus, and clarity. There is a prior task intricately involved with the process of moral education which needs to be addressed if effective moral education is to take place. There is a need to establish a continuing dialogue concerning the exact nature of the moral rules which govern our social lives. These rules need to be formulated as unambiguously and with the greatest probability for social concensus so they may serve as a guide to teachers, curriculum developers, students, etc. We live in a complex and rapidly evolving society and although aspects of our moral rules appear to shift in response to broader shifts in society, there exists a stable base which underpins all our social life. These rules need to be formulated in a manner that is understandable to teachers and students alike and which provide the vehicle for sequence in curriculum as well as the perspective from which the individual comes to understand his obligations. In other words, the content of moral education needs to be spelled out. It is not created by students, although they necessarily

interpret it in light of their experiences.

The task of identification of the goals of the content of morality is both a difficult and easy one. The prima facie rules are not difficult to establish. The actual rules, that is how they occur in specific situations, will vary from community to community. Bernard Gert (1970) has identified ten rules which provide one formulation of the sorts of rules which underpin moral life within our society.

The First Five	The Second Five
1. Don't kill	6. Don't deceive
2. Don't cause pain	7. Keep your promise
3. Don't disable	8. Don't cheat
4. Don't deprive of freedom or opportunity	9. Obey the law
5. Don't deprive of pleasure	10. Do your duty

These rules are not presented here as definitive, but rather as an example of the kind of statement necessary to guide the enterprise of moral education as sketched out in this paper.

Persisting Questions in Moral Education

There are a variety of persisting and inescapable problems which doggedly pursue anyone involved in moral education. In this final section I will address those questions which seem especially salient to the approach being advocated here.

The problem of indoctrination. Adults do not have absolute rights over children; however, they do have a responsibility to see that they grow into free adults with the capacity for a successful and happy life in society. This responsibility includes the right to use force or compulsion with children and the right to condition their behavior to some extent. The task for moral education is to carry out this reponsibility

for the nurturance and education of youth in a manner that does not do harm to the child's intelligence or capacity for rationality. Clearly certain forms of conditioning which produce strong and irreversible irrational reactions to situations cannot be a legitimate goal for any moral education program. On the other hand, the giving of reasons by adults has very little effect on children's behavior before a given age until the child is fully developed, the reasons given by adults are seldom fully understood in the manner intended by adults. The fallacy of existing efforts at moral education has been to assume that with young children we can avoid the indoctrinaire and non-rational in moral education. One of the paradoxes involved in moral education is that the means used to achieve adult morality violate aspects of that morality.

If it is accepted that non-rational means are both inevitable and necessary to instill the required commitment and deference to the moral order, then the goal of moral education is to accomplish that important function in a manner which does not endanger the intelligence of the child or his capacity for reflective thought. Approaches which produce strong persisting and irreversible irrational reactions to moral life will hinder the child's development toward adult morality. An important goal of moral education is an understanding and appreciation of one's society and its workings. Even in earlier moral education the giving of reasons as a part of the moral education effort and the expectation that children should give reasons for their actions, lays the groundwork for mature development.

The problem of cultural relativism. When one adopts the position that the essence of moral life is specific moral rules embedded within a societal framework, inevitably there will arise questions concerning how

one is to interpret the wide variety of rules which are found to exist both within and between societies. As Durkheim points out, the diversity of moral codes themselves are subordinate to a more universal conception of morality:

> "...the state must commit itself to the good of realizing among its own people the general interests of humanity - committing itself to an access of justice and organizing itself in such a way that there is always a clear correspondence between the merit of its citizens and their conditions of life with an end of reducing or preventing individual suffering (p. 77)."

In other words, there do exist certain superordinate moral principles which all societies can share. The rules which serve the general interest of humanity assume different froms at different times and places. The actual duties of an individual within a society may vary, however, to the extent that the actual duties presented to the members of a society by that society are not consistent with these prima facie duties then they are not binding on that individual. This observation raises the question regarding the existence of local rules which are unjust or promote evil. In times of crisis, when the moral underpinnings of collective existence seem shaken or called into question, the challenge of moral life is to seek out and clarify alternative new conceptions of justice and social solidarity.

The problem of the conflict in moral life. Any approach which emphasizes the routine and the rules which govern social life must recognize that at times individuals will be confronted with novel and unsettling situations to which one's moral code does not appear to clearly apply. This is a significant area of concern for any approach to moral education, but it must not be lost sight of that the art of moral life is primarily that of reducing most things to that of habit and routine.

We cannot decide anew in every situation how we should act. We must free ourselves from continual deliberation and introspection so that we can devote ourselves to the crucial situations with energy when they arise. The application of moral rules to new and novel situations defines an important task of moral education but it does not, as many have advocated, define the entire enterprise. Both the routine and the novel are a part of the same moral orientation, in one case the application of rules to situations has become routine, in the other case the rules' application must be done on an ad hoc basis. In both cases, however, the nature of the rules and the acquiescence to those rules lie at the foundation of the moral orientation.

CONCLUSION

In this paper I have attempted to identify what I see as the major weaknesses in contemporary moral education. To place these weaknesses in perspective I have compared the assumptions of moral education with the evidence regarding the development of prosocial behavior and with the structural-functional perspective of Emile Durkheim. I have argued that contemporary moral education, by emphasizing exclusively the fostering of individual rationality in morality, has both neglected the very real collective demands of social life and posits a restrictive view of the moralization process. The development of reason cannot be the only goal of moral education. A commitment to collective ends and the discipline necessary to function within collective life are also essential ingredients of moral life.

Moral confusion, injustice, and rapidly changing social patterns confront the society of the child and the educator. The challenge of

moral education in these times is to redefine our societal commitment to the general welfare, justice, and human dignity in a way that is compatible with contemporary life and also provide a basis for stability and the nurturance of the young. The weakness of current approaches to moral education is not in what they advocate, but rather in what is left out.

The trend among youth, and society at large, is toward egoism and withdrawal. Unless the next generation possesses a commitment for collective life and the moral rules necessarily entailed, rather than mere verbal skills, the future of our society is bleak indeed. Moral education needs to free itself from the exclusive focus on rationality and strive for a program which balances commitment to moral rules with the rationality necessary to deal effectively with the non-routine, social change and challenges to the moral basis of contemporary life.

Footnotes

1. The discussion which follows below draws heavily upon, but is not limited to, the recent summary of research of the development of prosocial behavior by Muessen and Eisenberg-Berg (1977). The reader is referred to Muessen and Eisenberg-Berg (1977) for the specific citations supporting the generalizations presented.

2. The structural-functional theory in sociology holds that social structure and dynamics are adaptive to and fulfill functions for personal needs and social requirements. That is, existing forms of society serve an essential role in the maintenance of that society's equilibrium and continuing survival. To understand any dimension of society like morality and moral education, one looks for functional value of that institution for the society. Emile Durkheim was one of the early writers associated with this perspective.

3. I concur with Oliver and Shaver (1966) in this regard: "...the classroom is an inappropriate place to subvert the ideals of society... if the teacher cannot in good faith operate from the ideals of the society in which he lives, he should leave the society and teach somewhere else or attempt to influence the adult community to change its value structure (p. 10n)."

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